DRAFT MINUTES

SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
BJ's Restaurant
990 N Center Street
Gaylord, Michigan
September 28, 2004

Chairman Manson called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, September 28, 2004 in Gaylord, Michigan.

Members Present:

Bill Manson, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Grand Rapids Elza Inman, Grant Sponsor, Brethren
James Duke, Region I, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Munising Bill Lucas, Region II, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Cadillac Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins
Jack Nelson, Business Community, Greenville
Orville Olson, Representative at Large, Ludington
Jason Dinsmore for Sheriff Nelson J. Cannon

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Randy Charles, US Forest Service Terry L. Johnson, Antrim County Sheriff Department

Staff Present:

Jim McMillan, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Roscommon Lt. Creig Grey, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Lansing Maureen Houghton, Grants, Contracts and Customer Service (GCACS), Lansing Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing Steve Kubisiak, Motorized Vehicle Program Manager, FMFM, Lansing Ron Yesney, FMFM, Marquette Bill O'Neill, FMFM, Gaylord Kim Dufresne, FMFM, Plainwell Robin Pearson, FMFM, Gaylord Steve Cameron, FMFM, Kalkaska Don Klingler, FMFM, Gaylord Curt Bacon, LED, Marquette

The Snowmobile Advisory Committee, Department staff and audience introduced themselves. **Mr. Manson** welcomed everyone.

MINUTES

The minutes of the June 22, 2004, Snowmobile Advisory Committee Meeting was acknowledged. **Mr. Murray** noted a typographical error in the motion to adopt the April minutes.

Motion by Mr. Murray to adopt the minutes of the June 22, 2004 meeting as corrected; seconded by Mr. Lucas. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Haywire/Coalwood Grade Trail Proposal – Tabled until the December meeting agenda.

<u>Marquette County Road Commission Signing Issue</u> – **Mr. Manson** provided background. The Commission billed a club for installation of snowmobile trail crossing signs on county roads. He said

this is a county responsibility and cited the law. **Mr. Yesney** asked for advice from the Committee. Discussion ensued.

Motion by Mr. Murray to not support payment to Marquette County for county road signs; seconded by Mr. Lucas. The Department of Natural Resources (Department) will send a letter to the county. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

<u>Snowmobile Trail Signing on Private Lands During Summer Months</u> – Mr. Manson provided background. All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use on designated snowmobile trails located on private land in the Upper Peninsula has become a problem in some areas. He suggested clubs remove snowmobile trail markings and install gates in problem areas for the non-snow season.

Mr. Duke said he believes this is a non-issue for some landowners. He believes gates and regulatory signs could solve the problem and that it could be worked out between the clubs and the land owner.

Mr. Olson said that whatever decision is made should be adhered to.

Mr. Yesney said the problem is becoming worse in some areas because local businesses are telling people they can ride their ATVs on all snowmobile trails. He expressed concern that some private landowners may not be willing to renew snowmobile trail leases in the future.

Mr. Manson said he believes this is more of a local public relations issue and suggested the Department put together an information piece and work with the clubs and affected land owners.

Mr. Radabaugh said this topic could be added to the agenda for Upper Peninsula Grant Sponsor Preseason Meeting(s).

<u>Chocolay Township Speed Limit</u> – **Mr. Manson** provided background and complemented Mr. Yesney for the presentation he made on this topic at the June meeting.

Mr. Radabaugh reported the Department is working on a proposal for a speed limit on a four mile long segment of the trail that goes through a residential area in Chocolay Township. He noted the proposal must be approved by the Chief of Forest, Mineral and Fire Management, the Resource Management Deputy and the Director.

Motion by Mr. Lucas to not endorse a speed limit; seconded by Mr. Olson.

Mr. Manson cited a letter that was sent to the Department from the Region 1 Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA) opposing a speed limit. He would like to see one more year to evaluate the current situation. He believes more law enforcement would resolve the problem.

Mr. Manson called for a voice vote:

Mr. Manson -- Ave

Mr. Inman -- Aye

Mr. Duke -- Aye

Mr. Lucas -- Ave

Mr. Murray -- Ave

Mr. Nelson -- Aye

Mr. Olson -- Aye

Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Mr. Olson said he believes the law already has provisions that provide law enforcement officials the ability to write tickets for operating a snowmobile too fast for conditions, or in a reckless manner.

Mr. Yesney reported that local township law enforcement officials do not believe the current law is adequate to enforce speed.

Mr. Murray said this is a political issue and urged the local trail sponsor to work with Mr. Yesney and local officials.

Mr. Radabaugh stated that if a Director's Order for a speed limit is approved it may include a two year test period with a sunset provision, at which time the effectiveness of the speed limit would be evaluated. He said the proposal is being developed in consideration of resolving a land use conflict in a residential area.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

<u>Gaylord-Cheboygan Work Group</u> – **Mr. Manson** reported the workgroup has not met recently. The Pigeon River Advisory Committee is opposed to designation of snowmobile trails within the boundary of the Pigeon River Country. No alternative reroutes have been found.

Mr. Manson reported hearings on proposed legislation regarding snowmobile use within highway rights-of-way are progressing. **Mr. Radabaugh** added that the Department is working with MDOT on language.

Mr. O'Neill reported a sub-committee of the workgroup is continuing to explore alternative routes around the Pigeon River Country. He said one alternative under consideration would require crossing I-75. He noted that a feasibility study would need to be done.

Mr. Manson asked that this item be place on the December meeting agenda.

<u>Long-Range Planning Subcommittee</u> – **Mr. Olson** reported the Committee did not meet since the last meeting. He asked clubs that are working on their own local emergency signing program to contact him.

<u>Finance Subcommittee</u> – **Mr. Inman** reported the finance subcommittee met in Grand Rapids to discuss the need for a fuel cost adjustment for the 2004 snowmobile season. He reported the Department denied the Committee's recommendation for a fuel cost adjustment. He noted the recent increase in steel prices and the need to revisit the upper reimbursement limits for equipment. **Mr. Inman** noted the reduction of club grooming miles, to 50 miles per groomer, will result in the need for nine additional groomers next year. He reported that a total of approximately twenty five new groomers will be needed next year.

<u>Grant Sponsor Meetings</u> – **Mr. Manson** reported that MSA representatives met with sponsor clubs throughout the state to identify issues and concerns with the snowmobile program. He said that 85% of the clubs feel they are not covering costs at the \$3.50 per mile grooming rate. He believes there is a need to revisit reimbursement rates for grooming, signing and brushing. He believes there is a need to review bid limits and a need for a catastrophic grooming equipment repair fund. He said the Committee needs to consider how the program should be run in the future. Grants verses contracts, verses changing the administrative rules to allow clubs to be reimbursed for administrative costs.

Mr. Duke reported that a common theme he heard from the sponsors was that it is increasingly difficult to find volunteers. He suggested considering paying groomer operator's wages.

Mr. Lucas believes grooming reimbursement rates need to be increased in order to cover equipment purchase expenses.

- **Mr. Radabaugh** referenced the funding plan that the Department developed with input from the Committee to justify the fee increase. He noted the limits for equipment and grooming rates were just increased based on the recent fee increase. **Mr. Manson** said the plan needs to be revisited.
- **Mr. Radabaugh** suggested consideration of a 100% reimbursement for equipment if sponsors are having problems covering equipment expenses. **Mr. Manson** did not support this idea.
- **Mr. Radabaugh** reported that a workgroup made up of Department staff and Committee members is being put together to address sponsor and SAC concerns. Mr. Manson is developing a list of issues to be addressed.

STAFF REPORTS

<u>Fuel Cost Adjustment</u> – **Mr. Radabaugh** reported that a fuel cost adjustment was not justified based upon review of the grooming cost analysis. He noted that the overall statewide grooming cost average went down from the previous year and was below \$3.50.

Mr. Manson said fuel cost adjustments were made in previous years and expressed disappointment in the Department's decision on this issue.

Mr. Murray said it is important for sponsors to fill out all grooming reports completely and accurately in order to document actual costs associated with the grooming program.

<u>Liability Insurance</u> – **Mr. Radabaugh** reported the Department's legal council completed a review of the snowmobile program's insurance requirements. He clarified that: 1) The Department is not requiring "Acts and Omissions Insurance"; 2) Grantees are not considered agents of the State, but rather considered independent contractors; 3) The State of Michigan must be named as an additional insured party on the policy.

Mr. Manson reported that insurance requirements have been resolved and clarified with International Paper. **Mr. Yesney** recognized Richard Krupp from the Lake Superior Snow Riders for working with International Paper on this issue.

<u>Grant Administrative Processes</u> – **Ms. Houghton** highlighted the administrative approval process. All grants of \$25,000 or more must be submitted to the State Administrative Board for approval. She reported the snowmobile grants are on the Board's calendar and should be approved October 19, 2004. Grant amendments that meet or exceed \$25,000 must be re-submitted to the Board for approval. She distributed the Board's meeting schedule and noted more information is posted on the Department of Management and Budget's website. Discussion ensued. **Ms. Houghton** answered questions.

- **Mr. Radabaugh** noted it is important for sponsors to provide complete grant applications by the deadline date so grants can be executed by October 1, 2005.
- **Mr. Manson** inquired on the status of 2005 equipment grants. Discussion ensued about this process and whether or not two grant cycles are needed. **Mr. Radabaugh** suggested Mr. Kennedy work with Mr. Inman to determine overall equipment needs for the year. Staff will review process to determine if equipment needs can be addressed in one grant cycle.
- **Mr. Kennedy** reported a number of sponsors still do not have complete grant applications and therefore their grants cannot be executed. He asked for the Committee's advice on how to address this situation. **Mr. Lucas** said he would like an opportunity for the committee members to contact them before the Department sends a "notice of failure to perform". Contact information will be provided to the Committee. Discussion ensued.

<u>Forest Certification</u> – **Mr. Radabaugh** provided an overview and highlighted statutory authorization for the forest certification program. He said a member of the forest certification team could be made available to speak to the Committee if they desired. **Mr. Manson** requested more information about the forest certification program be sent to the SAC.

<u>Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Procedures</u> – **Mr. Kubisiak** provided an overview and highlighted statutory authorization for the soil erosion and sedimentation control program. Soil erosion and control plans must be prepared for any earth change operation greater than an acre in size or within 500 feet of a body of water. He noted bridge and culvert projects will require soil erosion and sedimentation control plans. He urged sponsors to work closely with their Department field contacts and noted that projects located on private lands must have the permits obtained in the name of the land owner. More information about this program is posted on the Department of Environmental Quality website at www.michigan.gov/deq.

<u>04-05 Snowmobile Trail Signing</u> – **Mr. Kubisiak** reported that the same sign standards will be used this season with the following exceptions: 1) Intersection signs should no longer be used in conjunction with yield signs; 2) New narrow bridge signs purchased this year will have text instead of a symbol. It is okay to use existing narrow bridge signs with symbols if sponsors have them in stock; 3) Use Rail Crossing warning signs at approved non-highway rail road crossings. Discontinue use of Stop signs at approved non-highway railroad crossings. These changes will be addressed at the sponsor meeting.

Recreation Specialists – See attached.

<u>Law Enforcement</u> – Captain Bacon introduced Lt. Creig Grey. Lt. Grey reported Capt. Alan Marble has been appointed as the new Chief of Law Enforcement. He reported the numbers of students trained in the snowmobile and marine safety education program are down about 20% from last year. The 2004 snowmobile accident report will be available at the next meeting. Lt. Grey reported Law Enforcement was anticipating a larger appropriation for snowmobile law enforcement and noted the need for a budget adjustment. Captain Bacon spoke to the need to purchase snowmobiles for enforcement purposes and noted gaps in snowmobile training in some areas of the state. He encouraged the sponsors and Committee help find volunteers, especially in Genesee and Oakland Counties.

Mr. Klingler reported the Alpine Trails is no longer in the grooming program and thanked them for their many years of service. He said a new snowmobile organization in Gaylord will take over grooming responsibilities on the trails previously maintained by Alpine.

- Mr. Dufresne reported on several snowmobile projects in southwest Michigan.
- **Mr. Kennedy** announced the dates for the sponsor pre-season meetings.

<u>USDA Forest Service</u> – **Mr. Charles** said if any of the sponsors have questions concerning snowmobile issues on the Ottawa National Forest to contact him. He reported public comment is open on the draft "National Policy on Off-Highway Vehicle Management on National Forest Lands".

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association asked if snowmobile training materials were available. Training materials are available from Department Law Enforcement Division. He expressed concerns with ORV damage on snowmobile trails.

Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Club asked questions regarding the lease on the snowmobile trail located in the limestone quarry. He had questions about a trail lease payment. He asked to be present with his field contact when the trail is inspected and was directed to work with his field contact.

Bob Eller, Alpena Snowmobile Club asked if grant forms can be filled out on the computer and requested an electronic version of the form.

Bud Longroy, West Branch requested Jim McMillan send a letter to the Department field contact person to advise them that the guide signs they used last year are acceptable. He suggested the SAC send letters to the sponsors requesting that they document fuel costs.

Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers, Heart of North Snow Council asked if brush cutting equipment was eligible under the snowmobile equipment grant program. It was clarified that brush cutters are eligible in lieu of drags.

Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones said he received the snowmobile signs and they look good. He asked for clarification on use of narrow bridge signs and had questions about the amendment process.

Norm Theil, Trail Riders Snowmobile Club reported the Forest Service has released a scoping letter for public comment on the 56th Street snowmobile trail re-route. He is pleased to see changes in the grant program and supports increasing grooming rates.

Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association suggested an insignia of a snowmobile be placed on snowmobile trial signs to help differentiate them from ORV trials.

William R. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council suggested the Department provide more information about the equipment grant program to sponsors, and asked questions about the use of the new grant forms.

Dick Ranney, Chairman, Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Board recommended the ORV Board and SAC work together on the trail signing issue.

Don Mraz, St. Helen Snowpackers reported the Pine Road Bridge, over the South Branch of the AuSable River washed-out and there is a need to temporarily re-route the snowmobile trail. He said the Roscommon County Road Commission is searching for funding and plans to replace the bridge next spring. He was directed to work with his Department field contact to initiate the trail re-route proposal review process.

Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club inquired about the status of the snowmobile trials in the Houghton Lake area.

Public Present:

Dan White, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club Chris Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club Jim Barber, Jordan Valley Trails Council Gerry Argetsinger, Jordan Valley Trails Council Phil Garland, Trail Riders Snowmobile Club Norm Theil, Trail Riders Snowmobile Club Bradley Potter, Western Michigan Snowmobile Club Dick Ranney, ORV
Bud Longroy, West Branch
Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers, Heart
of North Snow Council
Dave Becker, St. Helen Snowpackers
Don Mraz, St. Helen Snowpackers
Bill Taylor, Lewiston Fun Ones
Brian Callaghan, Inland Lakes Snowmobile
Club
Don Jones, Alpine Snowmobile Trails

William R. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council

Martin Cottle. Sault Snowmobile Association

Jim Haskell, Alpine Snow Trails

Jerry Janeski, Alpena Snowmobile Association Ray Compeau, Alpena Snowmobile Club

Bob Eller, Alpena Snowmobile Club

Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Club

Jerry Beattie, Gaylord Area Snowmobile Trails Council

John Kress, Gaylord Area Snowmobile Trails

Council

Kent Smith, Gaylord Area Snowmobile Trails

Council

Herbert Lawson, P.I. Sno Trails Robert K. Pines, P.I. Sno Trails Rodney M. Altman, P.I. Snow Trails

Lowell Kage, Rosco-Higgins Trail Cruisers Bob Ulrich, Inland Lakes Snowmobile Club Ilene Geiss-Wilson, Gravling Visitors Bureau

RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORTS

WESTERN UPPER PENINSULA RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORT September 28, 2004 – Ron Yesney

Trail Information:

Porcupine Mountain Trail Proposal – The Gogebic Range Trail Authority has submitted a new trail proposal from M28 near Bingo's, north into the Porcupine Mountains. The proposal has been approved by Lansing staff. Gogebic Range Trail Authority's grant is now being amended to include funds for trail development. Once the grant is executed work is to begin on the trail.

Chassell to Painesdale Trail - Trail 19 from Chassell to Painesdale will be lost for the upcoming snowmobile season. Loss of land control has caused an impasse. The Keweenaw Tourism Council was able to keep the trail open last year on a temporary basis using a portion of a plowed county road; this is not an option any longer. It is hoped that Keweenaw Tourism, in conjunction with Department staff, will be able to develop an alternate route for the future that will provide a way for riders to access the Keweenaw Peninsula from the Baraga area.

Action Items:

Marquette County Road Commission Signing Issue – Hiawatha Trails was recently billed \$2,521 by the Marquette County Road Commission for eight snowmobile crossing signs. Hiawatha Trails did not request the signs, nor did the Department. Research has revealed that throughout the state neither Department, nor any active Trail Sponsor has ever been billed for snowmobile crossing signs by a highway maintenance organization. The Department and Hiawatha Trails are seeking a formal position on this matter from the Snowmobile Advisory Committee.

U.P. Snowmobile Signing on Private Lands in the Summer Months - ORV usage of snowmobile trails in the Upper Peninsula is continuing to cause problems with private landowners. Many U.P. landowners, who have been receptive to snowmobiling and have traditionally granted permits to Trail Sponsors, are now reversing their positions. Landowners are withdrawing their permits due to increased ATV traffic on their property in the summer months. In an effort to stem this ORV riding on snowmobile trails, and to keep the snowmobile program strong, it has been suggested that snowmobile trail signs should be removed from all trails on private lands during the summer months. The Department is seeking a formal position on this matter from the Snowmobile Advisory Committee.

Railway Abandonment's:

Lake Superior and Ishpeming Railroad (LS+I) – has filed for abandonment of a stretch of track from Ishpeming to Republic, 25 miles. The abandonment is being examined by the Surface Transportation Board (STP). If the abandonment is approved by the STP, the Department may seek acquisition of this grade.

Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad (ELS) – has filed for abandonment of a stretch of grade from Republic to Channing, 23 miles. The abandonment is being examined by several organizations. An appraisal has been done. If the abandonment is approved, the Department will likely seek acquisition of this grade. The Department may look for approval to acquire this grade through the Snow Country Byways program.

Acquisitions:

Keweenaw Point Land – The Department has recently taken ownership of an 8,387 acre tract near the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula. The tract includes nine miles of Lake Superior Shoreline, several inland lakes and Manitou Island. A Citizen Advisory Committee has been formed and is in the process of analyzing this 8,387 acre tract. The Advisory Committee will make land management recommendations to the Department. The Advisory Committee has a person (Don Kauppi) on board representing the interests of Snowmobilers. Don's recommendations for motorized use of the Keweenaw Point lands were approved at the September Keweenaw Point Citizen Advisory Committee meeting. For additional information on Don's motorized trail recommendations on this parcel, see Don or myself. If you'd like to provide written comments to the Advisory Committee, please contact me for a form to fill out.

EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORT September 28, 2004 – Dan Moore

Primary activities have centered on campground inspections and campground facility inventory. Basically getting a handle on what structures and equipment we have in each of the 39 EUP campgrounds.

Also starting to GPS each of the east end campgrounds. This is primarily for planning purposes and to get an up-to-date, accurate map of each campground. This will include GPSng the campground roads and each campsite. Information stations, toilets and wells will simply be noted points.

Attended "punch list" meeting at the Red Creek Bridge (overpass on I-75 at M-134 exit) site on August 24. Project is or will be completed shortly. Planning a dedication/ribbon cutting ceremony, but things are up in the air right now. Placed gates on the trail on both sides of the bridge, primarily to keep ATVs and full size vehicles off the bridge. East side gate will be just off the junction of the bridge approach and the North Service Road; west side gate will be just off of Mackinaw Trail to keep vehicles from traveling down the power line right-of-way.

Working with Richard Kennedy to set up/coordinate pre-season sponsor meetings. Reported on upcoming snowmobile season and grant program issues at the recent UP Managers meeting.

Working on the final stages of developing the Lime Island Management Plan. Final draft submitted to EUP District Supervisor for review and submission to FMFM Management Team.

Attended Mackinaw County Water Safety Review Team meeting in August. Primary focus of this team is information, education and warning signs regarding rip currents along the Great Lakes shorelines.

EASTERN LOWER PENINSULA RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORT September 28, 2004 – Robin Pearson

ACQUISITIONS:

Rogers City Spur thru limestone quarry: Department has closed on Railroad grade through the quarry.

Mackinaw City: The Department closing on the easement swap/exchange with Schepler's in Mackinaw City is close to being completed.

TRAIL PROPOSALS:

<u>Bellaire Spur Trail:</u> Trail Proposal submitted was denied. Staff willing to continue work with applicant if an alternate route can be found to resolve or avoid Department concerns.

<u>Alanson to Petoskey</u>: Awaiting final reviews and comments from one more field contact then will send to Lansing for final decision.

<u>Route Around Limestone Quarry:</u> Department, Atlanta Unit Manager working with Quarry owners and snowmobile clubs to get a trail around the quarry instead of through it, which we now own.

<u>Alpena Connector:</u> Clubs are working with City of Alpena to have a trail through the city to connect Mackinaw to Alpena Rail Trail and Alpena to Hillman Rail Trail.

DIRECTOR'S LAND USE ORDERS:

Request for prohibiting ORV's on newly acquired Rail Trail segments (Roger's City Spur, Paxton Spur and Alpena to Hawks) was supported by field and sent to Lansing for approval and finalizing. No word from Lansing yet.

REQUESTS, INQUIRIES, NEWS, ETC.:

Snowmobile workshops for clubs to be held with Department staff around the state starting September 29th in Gaylord.

WESTERN LOWER PENINSULA RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORT September 28, 2004 – Todd Neiss

Issues

Manton Field Office is short staffed which may affect grooming the Mis-Kal Snowmobile Trail. Efforts are underway to utilize seasonal staff this winter to address the need.

Lakeshore Snowmobile Trail Proposal (USFS) - May of 2004 the Department sent the USFS a letter regarding issues that need to be addressed prior to Department's approval of such a trail. Status unknown—Ball in USFS court......

Pending Grants

Grant applied for in 2004 to repair/replace Muskegon River Bridge Evart, which is part of the Pere Marquette Trail. Status unknown

Grant applied for in 2004 to study Manistee River Bridge which would link Cadillac and Traverse City trails (Harlan to Yuma corridor). Status unknown.

Upcoming Events

Department's Southern Management Unit will be having a pre-season snowmobile meeting with clubs on October 12 Th, 7 p.m., at the Plainwell OSC. Todd Neiss will be attend/participate.

Department in NWLP will be having a pre-season snowmobile meeting with clubs on October 19th, 7 p.m., at the Carl T. Johnson Centre, Cadillac. Todd Neiss will attend/participate.

Notes

New Green form PR1858 (Recreation and Snowmobile Grants Program Reimbursement Request) and form PR 1855 (Weekly Snowmobile Trail Grooming Report) will both be available to Department field staff and clubs from Todd Neiss, Department-Cadillac OSC.